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Draft decision submitted by the Vice-President of the Council, Inga Rhonda King (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines)

Rules of procedure of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names and draft agenda for its first session

The Economic and Social Council, recalling its resolution 2018/2 of 10 November 2017, in which it decided that the rules of procedure of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names were to be drafted by the Bureau, in close consultation with the States Members of the United Nations, and be presented to the Council for adoption, decides:

(a) To approve the rules of procedure of the Group, as set out in annex I to the present decision;

(b) To approve the draft agenda for the first session of the Group, to be held in 2019, as set out in annex II to the present decision.

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Annex I

Rules of procedure of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names

Guiding principles

I. Aims

The basic aims of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names are:

(a) To emphasize the importance of the standardization of geographical names at the national and international levels and to demonstrate the benefits to be derived from such standardization;

(b) To collect the results of the work of national and international bodies dealing with the standardization of geographical names and to facilitate the dissemination of those results to States Members of the United Nations;

(c) To study and propose principles, policies and methods suitable for resolving problems of national and international standardization;

(d) To play an active role, by facilitating the supply of scientific and technical help, in particular to developing countries, in creating mechanisms for the national and international standardization of geographical names;

(e) To provide a vehicle for liaison and coordination among Member States, and between Member States and international organizations, on work associated with the standardization of geographical names;

(f) To implement the tasks assigned as a result of the resolutions adopted by the former United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names and by the new United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names;

(g) To emphasize, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, respect for equality among languages and the significance of geographical names as part of the historical and cultural heritage and identity of nations.

II. Principles

1. The Group of Experts shall act as a collegiate, consultative body; accordingly, agreement on non-procedural matters shall be reached by consensus and not by voting.

2. The decisions of the Group of Experts shall be submitted as recommendations to the Economic and Social Council for final endorsement, with the request that Member States give them the broadest possible publicity and exposure through appropriate means and channels, such as professional organizations, research and scientific institutions and institutions of higher learning. The decisions of the Group of Experts shall be of a recommendatory character.

3. Questions involving national sovereignty shall not be discussed by the Group of Experts. The application of individual geographical names shall not be decided by the Group of Experts.

4. The Group of Experts, in its activities, shall adhere to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and to the following provisions:

(a) The standardization of geographical names must be based on the achievements of science in relation to both language treatment and the technical means of processing and generating toponymic data;

(b) International standardization of geographical names must be carried out on the basis of national standardization.

III. Objectives

The objectives of the Group of Experts are:

(a) To develop procedures and establish mechanisms for standardization in response to national requirements and particular requests;

(b) To provide continuity for activities between its sessions and to provide leadership in the implementation of resolutions adopted by the former United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names and at the sessions of the Group of Experts;

(c) To encourage the discussion and study of practical and theoretical steps directed towards standardization;

(d) To coordinate the activities of linguistic or geographical divisions formed to further the work at the national level, to encourage the active participation of countries and divisions and to promote a degree of uniformity in the work undertaken;

(e) To create any structure necessary to supplement the work of divisions and to deal with issues beyond the scope of a division;

(f) To develop appropriate programmes to assist with training in individual countries and groups of countries, so as to achieve standardization where it is lacking;

(g) To make geospatial management organizations aware of the importance of using standardized geographical names;

(h) To maintain liaison with international organizations dealing with related subjects and the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management and to encourage divisions of the Group of Experts to participate in United Nations regional or other cartographic conferences;

(i) To work at the highest possible national, international and United Nations levels to interrelate toponymy, cartography and other programmes dealing with geospatial information;

(j) To make standardization principles and standardized geographical names available as practical information for as wide a user community as possible, through all appropriate media.

Rules of procedure

Rule 1

1. The United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names was established as a subsidiary body of the Economic and Social Council pursuant to Council resolution 2018/2 to further the standardization of geographical names at the national and international levels.

2. The Economic and Social Council, by its resolution 2018/2, decided that the United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names and the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names, mandated by its resolution 715 A (XXVII), must be discontinued in their current formats and be subsumed by the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names established pursuant to resolution 2018/2, which would retain their respective mandates, where relevant, as well as resolutions of the United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names and responsibility for the implementation thereof.

I. Definitions

Rule 2

For the purposes of these rules:

(a) "Group" means the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names, established pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution 2018/2;

(b) "Representatives" means representatives of States Members of the United Nations, including experts appointed by Governments;

(c) "Division" means one of the major linguistic and geographical divisions of the world, as listed in the annex to these rules.

II. Composition

Rule 3

The Group shall be composed of representatives of States Members of the United Nations. In appointing their representatives, Member States will seek to designate experts with specific knowledge drawn from the interrelated fields of geography, cartography, geospatial information, linguistics and history.

III. Representation for sessions

Rule 4

1. Each Member State shall designate a person or persons to serve as its representatives on the Group, including a head of delegation.

2. Each Member State may designate alternate representatives to act in place of its representatives at any meeting of the Group or of its subsidiary bodies. Such alternate representatives so designated shall have the same status as the representatives, including the right to vote.

3. The representatives of a Member State may be accompanied by such advisers and experts as may be required.

IV. Sessions

Rule 5

The Group shall hold one session every two years, on dates fixed by the Economic and Social Council, taking into account any recommendations of the Group. A session shall be held, in principle, over a period of five days.

V. Agenda

Rule 6

1. The draft agenda for the first session of the Group was prepared in accordance with paragraph 6 of Economic and Social Council resolution 2018/2 and is contained in annex II to Council decision [ ].

2. As far as the provisional agendas for the subsequent sessions are concerned, the provisional agenda drawn up by the Group at its previous session and communicated to the Governments invited by the Secretary-General of the United Nations to send representatives to participate in the session shall constitute the provisional agenda for the session. Representatives participating in the session may propose items for inclusion in, or amendments to, the provisional agenda.

VI. Bureau

Election and term of office
Rule 7

1. The Group shall have an elected Bureau that shall guide the activities of the Group during and between its sessions.

2. The Group shall elect the following officers from among the representatives of Member States: a Chair, two Vice-Chairs and two Rapporteurs, with due regard for the equitable geographical rotation of those officers from among the regions of the Member States.

Rule 8

1. The officers of the first session of the Group shall be elected at the commencement of the first session and shall serve until the terms of office of their successors commence.

2. The officers of the subsequent sessions shall be elected at the end of the session prior to which they will assume their functions. They shall serve for two sessions and until the terms of office of their successors commence. They shall be eligible for re-election.

Replacement
Rule 9

1. If the Chair is to be absent from a meeting or part thereof or ceases to be able to perform the functions of Chair, one of the Vice-Chairs or, in their absence, one of the Rapporteurs shall act as Chair.

2. A Vice-Chair or Rapporteur, when acting as Chair, shall have the same powers and duties as the Chair.

3. If a Vice-Chair or Rapporteur is unable to perform the functions of office, the Chair, with the support of the Group, shall appoint a member of the Group to complete the unexpired portion of the term of office.

VII. Secretariat

Duties of the Secretariat
Rule 10

The Secretary of the Group, appointed by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, shall act in that capacity in all meetings of the Group. The Secretary may designate a member of the Secretariat to take the Secretary's place at any meeting.

Rule 11

The Secretary shall provide and direct such staff as required by the Group and be responsible for all the arrangements that may be necessary for its meetings.

Statements by the Secretariat
Rule 12

The Secretary or a representative thereof may, subject to rule 24, make oral as well as written statements to the Group concerning any questions under consideration.

VIII. Conduct of business

Quorum
Rule 13

The Chair may declare a meeting open and permit the debate to proceed when at least one third of the Member States are present.

General powers of the Chair
Rule 14

1. In addition to exercising the powers conferred upon the Chair elsewhere by these rules, the Chair shall declare the opening and closing of each plenary meeting of the Group, direct the discussions, ensure the observance of these rules, accord the right to speak, put questions to the vote and announce decisions. The Chair, subject to these rules, shall have complete control of the proceedings of the Group and over the maintenance of order at its meetings. The Chair shall rule on points of order and, subject to these rules, shall have complete control over the proceedings of the Group and over the maintenance of order of its meetings. The Chair may propose to the Group the closure of the list of speakers, a limitation on the time to be allowed to speakers and on the number of times that each member may speak on an item, the adjournment or the closure of the debate and the suspension or adjournment of a meeting.

2. The Chair, in the exercise of the functions of the Chair, remains under the authority of the Group.

Points of order
Rule 15

1. During the discussion of any matter, a representative may at any time raise a point of order, which shall be decided immediately by the Chair in accordance with these rules. A representative may appeal against the ruling of the Chair. The appeal shall be immediately put to the vote, and the ruling of the Chair shall stand, unless overruled by a majority of the Member States present and voting.

2. A representative may not, in raising a point of order, speak on the substance of the matter under discussion.

Closing of the list of speakers
Rule 16

During the course of the debate, the Chair may announce the list of speakers and, with the consent of the Group, declare the list closed. When there are no more speakers, the Chair shall, with the consent of the Group, declare the debate closed. Such closure shall have the same effect as closure by decision of the Group.

Right of reply
Rule 17

The right of reply shall be accorded by the Chair to a representative of any Member State who requests it. Representatives should attempt, in exercising this right, to be as brief as possible and preferably to deliver their statements at the end of the meeting at which this right is requested.

Suspension or adjournment of the meeting
Rule 18

During the discussion of any matter, a representative may at any time move the suspension or the adjournment of the meeting. No discussion of such motions shall be permitted, and they shall be put to the vote immediately.

Adjournment of the debate
Rule 19

During the discussion of any matter, a representative may move the adjournment of the debate on the item under discussion. Permission to speak on the motion shall be accorded only to two representatives favouring and to two opposing the adjournment, after which the motion shall be put to the vote immediately.

Closure of the debate
Rule 20

A representative may, at any time, move the closure of the debate on the item under discussion, whether or not any other representative has signified a wish to speak. Permission to speak on the motion shall be accorded only to two speakers opposing the closure, after which the motion shall be put to the vote immediately.

Speeches
Rule 21

1. No one may address the Group without having previously obtained the permission of the Chair. Subject to rules 18 and 20 to 23, the Chair shall call upon speakers in the order in which they signify their desire to speak.

2. Debate shall be confined to the questions before the Group, and the Chair may call a speaker to order if the remarks are not relevant to the subject under discussion.

3. The Group may limit the time allowed to speakers and the number of times that the representative may speak on a question; permission to speak on a motion to set such limits shall be accorded only to two representatives in favour of and two opposing such limits, after which the motion shall be put to the vote immediately. In any event, the Chair shall limit interventions on procedural questions to a maximum of five minutes. When the debate is limited and a speaker exceeds the allotted time, the Chair shall call the speaker to order without delay.

Withdrawal of proposals or motions
Rule 22

A proposal, amendment or motion may be withdrawn by its proposer at any time before a decision on it has been taken, provided that it has not been amended. A proposal or a motion thus withdrawn may be reintroduced by any representative.

Submission of proposals
Rule 23

Proposals and amendments shall normally be submitted in writing to the Secretary, who shall circulate copies to the representatives in all the official languages. Unless the Group decides otherwise, proposals and amendments shall be discussed or put to the vote no earlier than 24 hours after copies have been circulated to all Member States.

Reconsideration of proposals
Rule 24

When a proposal or an amendment has been adopted or rejected, it may not be reconsidered at the same session unless the Group, by a two-thirds majority of the representatives present and voting, so decides. Permission to speak on a motion to reconsider shall be accorded only to two representatives opposing the motion, after which it shall be put to the vote immediately.

IX. Decision-making

Consensus
Rule 25

1. On all except procedural matters, the Group shall take decisions by consensus. In the event that a consensus is not achieved, the matter shall be deferred for reworking and resubmission.

2. The Group shall make its best endeavours to ensure that all matters of procedure are decided by consensus. In the absence of a consensus on procedural matters, the Chair may put the matter to the vote. If a representative requests a vote on procedural matters, the Chair shall put the matter to the vote.

3. If the question arises whether a matter is one of procedure or of substance, the Chair shall rule on the question. An appeal against that ruling shall be immediately put to the vote, and the Chair's ruling shall stand unless overruled by a majority of the Member States present and voting.

Voting rights
Rule 26

Each Member State shall have one vote.

Majority required
Rule 27

Subject to rule 25, decisions of the Group shall be made by a majority of the Member States present and voting.

Equally divided votes
Rule 28

1. If a vote is equally divided on a matter other than an election, a second vote shall be taken after an adjournment of the meeting for 15 minutes.

2. If that vote is equally divided, the proposal or motion shall be regarded as rejected.

Meaning of the phrase "Member States present and voting"
Rule 29

For the purpose of these rules, the phrase "Member States present and voting" means Member States casting an affirmative or negative vote. Member States that abstain from voting are considered as not voting.

Method of voting
Rule 30

1. Except as provided for in rule 40, the Group may vote by show of hands, except that a representative may request a roll call, which shall then be taken in the English alphabetical order of the names of the Member States, beginning with the Member State whose name is drawn by lot by the Chair. The name of each Member State shall be called in all roll calls, and its representative shall reply "yes", "no" or "abstention".

2. When the Group votes by mechanical means, a non-recorded vote shall replace a vote by show of hands and a recorded vote shall replace a roll call. A representative may request a recorded vote. In the case of a recorded vote, the Group shall, unless a representative requests otherwise, dispense with the procedure of calling out the names of the Member States.

3. The vote of each Member State participating in a roll call or a recorded vote shall be inserted in the record.

Conduct during voting
Rule 31

After the Chair has announced the commencement of voting, no representative may interrupt the voting except on a point of order in connection with the actual process of voting.

Explanation of vote
Rule 32

Representatives may make brief statements consisting solely of explanation of their votes, before the voting has commenced or after the voting has been completed. The representative of a Member State sponsoring a proposal or motion shall not speak in explanation of vote thereon, except if it has been amended.

Division of proposals
Rule 33

Parts of a proposal or an amendment shall be decided on separately if a representative requests that the proposal be divided. If a representative objects, the motion for division shall be voted on. Permission to speak on the motion shall be accorded to two representatives in favour of and two opposing the division. If the motion is carried, those parts of the proposal that are subsequently approved shall be put to the Group for a decision as a whole. If all operative parts of the proposal have been rejected, the proposal shall be considered to have been rejected as a whole.

Order of voting on amendments
Rule 34

When an amendment is moved to a proposal, the amendment shall be voted on first. When two or more amendments are moved to a proposal, the amendment furthest removed in substance from the original proposal shall be voted on first and then the amendment next furthest removed therefrom, and so on until all the amendments have been put to the vote. Where, however, the adoption of one amendment necessarily implies the rejection of another amendment, the latter amendment shall not be put to the vote. If one or more amendments are adopted, the amended proposal shall then be voted on.

Amendments
Rule 35

An amendment is a proposal that does no more than add to, delete from or revise part of another proposal.

Order of voting on proposals
Rule 36

1. If two or more proposals, other than amendments, relate to the same question, the proposals shall, unless the Group decides otherwise, be voted on in the order in which they are submitted. The Group may, after each vote on a proposal, decide whether to vote on the next proposal.

2. Revised proposals shall be voted on in the order in which the original proposals were submitted, unless the revision substantially departs from the original proposal. In that case, the original proposal shall be considered as withdrawn and the revised proposal shall be treated as a new proposal.

3. A motion requiring that no decision be taken on a proposal shall have priority over that proposal.

Elections
Rule 37

All elections shall be held by secret ballot unless, in the absence of any objection, the Group decides to proceed without taking a ballot on an agreed candidate or slate. When candidates are to be nominated, each nomination shall be made by only one representative, after which the Group shall immediately proceed to the election.

Rule 38

1. If, when only one elective place is to be filled, no candidate obtains in the first ballot the majority required, a second ballot shall be taken, confined to the two candidates having obtained the largest number of votes. If in the second ballot the votes are equally divided, the Chair shall decide between the candidates by drawing lots.

2. In the case of a tie in the first ballot among the candidates obtaining the second largest number of votes, a special ballot shall be held among such candidates for the purpose of reducing their number to two; similarly, in the case of a tie among three or more candidates obtaining the largest number of votes, a special ballot shall be held. If a tie again results in the special ballot, the Chair shall eliminate one candidate by drawing lots, and thereafter another ballot shall be taken among all the remaining candidates. The procedure prescribed by these rules shall, if necessary, be repeated until one candidate is duly elected.

Rule 39

1. When two or more elective places are to be filled at one time under the same conditions, those candidates, in a number not exceeding the number of such places, obtaining in the first ballot a majority required and the largest number of votes shall be elected.

2. If the number of candidates obtaining such majority is less than the number of places to be filled, additional ballots shall be held to fill the remaining places, provided that if only one place remains to be filled the procedures in rule 38 shall be applied. The ballot shall be restricted to the unsuccessful candidates having obtained the largest number of votes in the previous ballot, but not exceeding twice the number

of places remaining to be filled. However, in the case of a tie between a greater number of unsuccessful candidates, a special ballot shall be held for the purpose of reducing the number of candidates to the required number; if a tie again results among more than the required number of candidates, the Chair shall reduce their number to that required by drawing lots.

3. If such a restricted ballot (not counting a special ballot held under the conditions specified in the last sentence of paragraph 2) is inconclusive, the Chair shall decide among the remaining candidates by drawing lots.

X. Languages

Official and working languages
Rule 40

Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish shall be the official and working languages of the Group.

Interpretation
Rule 41

1. Speeches made in an official language shall be interpreted into the other official languages.

2. A representative may speak in a language other than an official language if the representative provides for interpretation into one of the official languages. Interpretation into the other official languages by the interpreters of the Secretariat may be based on the interpretation given in the first such language.

XI. Documents

Rule 42

Official documents of the Group shall be made available in the official languages of the Group.

Rule 43

1. Submission of a working paper for consideration by the Group does not mean that it has been endorsed or approved by the Group.

2. Consideration of a working paper by the Group is without political significance.

3. Consideration and discussion of a working paper by the Group must not be interpreted as support of, or opposition to, any political view or issue.

4. Subsequent reference to the working papers in the report of the Group on the session likewise shall have no political significance.

XII. Records

Recordings of meetings
Rule 44

Sound and video recordings of the meetings of the Group shall be made and kept by the Secretariat.

XIII. Public meetings

Rule 45

The meetings of the Group shall be held in public unless it decides otherwise.

XIV. Subsidiary bodies

Rule 46

1. The Group shall establish subsidiary bodies, such as technical groups or working groups, as may be required for the execution of its functions.

2. The rules of procedure of the Group shall apply mutatis mutandis to the proceedings of the subsidiary bodies. These bodies may, however, decide to dispense with interpretation into certain official languages.

Linguistic and geographical divisions
Rule 47

1. The Group shall be supported in its activities by linguistic and geographical divisions listed in the annex to these rules.

2. The number of linguistic and geographical divisions and their compositions may be revised as necessary by the Group.

3. A State shall decide for itself the division to wnich it wishes to belong. A State may be a member of another division provided that the nature of its participation does not change the linguistic and geographical character of the division or divisions concerned.

4. Each division shall elect, by methods of its own choosing, a Division Chair to represent the division at the meetings of the Group.

5. Each division may elect a Vice-Chair and such other officers as may be required.

6. The Division Chair and Vice-Chair shall stimulate activities in the standardization of geographical names within their division by all appropriate means, such as correspondence with national bodies on the standardization of geographical names and national geospatial agencies, and organization of meetings of the division members.

7. The Division Chair shall be responsible for ensuring that the work of the Group and its potential for technical assistance are brought to the attention of the individual States that are members of the division concerned and for reporting to the Group any special problems in the division.

8. To discuss technical and procedural matters, a division may organize meetings to be held in parallel with sessions of the Group and meetings of any body of its organizational structure, or at any other appropriate time.

XV. Participation of observers

Rule 48

1. Specialized agencies shall be entitled to be represented at meetings of the Group and to participate, without the right to vote. In deliberations with respect to items of concern to them, they may submit proposals regarding such items, which may be considered by the Group at the request of a representative of any Member State.

2. Written statements of such specialized agencies shall be distributed by the Secretariat to the Member States at the session in the languages in which such statements were made available to the Secretariat.

3. States, intergovernmental organizations and other entities accorded observer status by the General Assembly and other intergovernmental organizations designated on an ad hoc or a continuing basis by the Economic and Social Council may be represented at the meetings of the Group and may participate, without the right to vote in the deliberations with respect to items of concern to them.

4. Non-governmental organizations granted consultative status with the Economic and Social Council as well as other non-governmental organizations invited by the Group to participate in the sessions, including past sessions, of the Group and in the sessions of the previous United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names established pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution 715 (A) (XXVII) and meetings of the United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names may designate experts to sit as observers at public meetings of the session and may participate in the activities of the session when so invited by the Group.

5. A person with specialized knowledge of particular aspects of the standardization of geographical names may be invited by the Group to place before the session of the Group that specialized knowledge.

XVI. Amendments

Rule 49

These rules may be amended by a decision of the Group, taken by a two-thirds majority present and voting. No amendment shall become effective until it has been approved by the Economic and Social Council.

Annex

Linguistic or geographical divisions of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names

1. Africa Central Division
2. Africa East Division
3. Africa South Division
4. Africa West Division
5. Arabic Division
6. Asia East Division (other than China)
7. Asia South-East Division
8. Asia South-West Division (other than Arabic)
9. Baltic Division
10. Celtic Division
11. China Division
12. Dutch- and German-speaking Division
13. East Central and South-East Europe Division
14. Eastern Europe, Northern and Central Asia Division

15. East Mediterranean Division (other than Arabic)
16. French-speaking Division
17. India Division
18. Latin America Division
19. Norden Division
20. Pacific South-West Division
21. Portuguese-speaking Division
22. Romano-Hellenic Division
23. United Kingdom Division
24. United States of America/Canada Division

Annex II

Draft agenda for the first session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names

1. Opening of the session.
2. Election of officers.
3. Organizational matters:
   (a) Adoption of the rules of procedure;
   (b) Adoption of the agenda;
   (c) Organization of work, including establishment of subsidiary bodies;
   (d) Credentials of representatives.
4. Reports of the Chair and the Secretariat.
5. Reports:
   (a) Governments on the situation in their countries and on the progress made in the standardization of geographical names;
   (b) Divisions of the Group of Experts;
   (c) Working Group on Country Names;
   (d) National and international meetings and conferences.
6. Cooperation and liaison with other organizations:
   (a) International organizations;
   (b) Economic Commission for Africa and Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management.
7. National and international standardization of geographical names:
   (a) Names collection, office treatment, national authorities, features beyond a single sovereignty and international cooperation;
   (b) Toponymic guidelines for map and other editors for international use.
8. Social and economic benefits, supporting sustainable development, measures taken and proposed for the implementation of resolutions and evaluation of the work of the Group of Experts (Working Group on Evaluation and Implementation).
9. Issues of publicity for the Group of Experts and funding of Group projects (Working Group on Publicity and Funding).
10. Activities on national standardization in Africa (Task Team for Africa).
11. Toponymic education (Working Group on Training Courses in Toponymy).
12. Toponymic terminology (Working Group on Toponymic Terminology).
13. Geographical names as culture, heritage and identity, including indigenous, minority and regional languages and multilingual issues (Working Group on Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage).
14. Exonyms (Working Group on Exonyms).

15. Toponymic data files and gazetteers (data processing and tools, database management, data dissemination: products and services) (Working Group on Toponymic Data Files and Gazetteers).
16. Writing systems and pronunciation (Working Group on Romanization Systems).
17. Other toponymic issues.
18. Arrangements for the second session of the Group.
19. Other business.
20. Presentation and adoption of decisions.
21. Adoption of the report.
22. Election of officers of the second session.
23. Closing of the session.